



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

*Office of Steven K. Reviczky
Commissioner*



**REMARKS OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE STEVEN K.
REVICZKY
BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 19, 2014**

Good morning Chairwoman Gentile, Chairman Meyer, Vice Chairs Maynard and Albis, Ranking Members Chapin and Shaban, and members of the committee. My name is Steve Reviczky. It is my honor to serve as the commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, and to be here this morning to testify on the agency's 2014 legislative agenda.

Joining me is George Krivda, our legislative program manager, with Steve Anderson, Jason Bowsza, and Linda Piotrowicz, also from my office. Also joining me are Dr. of Veterinary Medicine Bruce Sherman, director of the agency's Bureau of Regulation and Inspection, with Wayne Kasacek, assistant bureau director, and David Carey, director of the Bureau of Aquaculture.

With a short session this year, our legislative package is lean but powerful, containing proposals that have the potential to significantly help us Grow Connecticut Farms--for the benefit of not only our hard-working farm families but all residents of our state. Thank you in advance for thoughtfully considering our requests.

Let me begin with S.B. 65 **AN ACT CONCERNING THE SALE OF FARM PRODUCTS AS "CONNECTICUT GROWN"** (Statutory Reference: Sec. 22-38). This important proposal, if enacted into law, would require all farm products for sale at farm-related markets in Connecticut to be clearly identified with the name and business address of the farm that grew or produced it, displayed on signage or labeling easily visible to the consumer.

Clear identification of Connecticut Grown farm products is an easy way to differentiate them from those grown elsewhere. Not only will this strengthen the integrity of the Connecticut Grown brand and bolster consumer confidence in that brand, this transparency will empower consumers to make better-informed purchasing decisions and more effectively support Connecticut farm families and businesses.

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Furthermore, Public Act 11-189 required the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development to "make recommendations to the Department of Agriculture on ways to increase the percentage of consumer dollars spent on Connecticut-grown fresh produce and farm products . . . by 2020, to not less than five per cent of all money spent by such residents on food." The results of the council's work can be more accurately measured if Connecticut Grown farm products can be readily identified and their sales better quantified.

The agency's next proposal, H.B. 5088 AN ACT CONCERNING CERTIFICATION FOR CONNECTICUT-GROWN MARKETS AND RESTAURANTS (Statutory References: Secs. 22-38b(b) and 22-38b(c)), will better align the associated state statutes with the agency's longstanding and successful Connecticut Grown program. It also will remove an obstacle in the establishment of a program encouraging more Connecticut Grown products in food markets.

The present Connecticut General Statute requires a grocery store to continuously stock 15 percent or more of its retail produce and dairy shelf space with farm products grown or produced in this state in order to call itself a Connecticut Farm Fresh Market. (A grocery store is defined as a business that employs 10 or more persons and is engaged in the retail sale of produce, such as fruits and vegetables; meats; poultry; seafood; nuts; dairy products; bakery products; or eggs.) No store other than one certified as a Connecticut Farm Fresh Market may use such words for promotional and marketing activities.

With the longstanding success of the Connecticut Grown program, the term "Connecticut Grown" is more readily recognized and understood in the marketplace than "Connecticut Farm Fresh."

At the same time, given the state's short growing season, the year-round, continuous stocking of 15 percent of retail shelf space with Connecticut Grown product currently required in the statute is beyond most grocer's ability, discouraging or prohibiting their participation in this creditable program.

In addition to changing the program name to one that is more meaningful from a practical standpoint, this proposal changes a participating grocer's Connecticut Grown stocking requirement to a minimum of five percent on a continual basis over the entire year, with 25 percent minimum during the months of July, August, and September, when Connecticut Grown farm products are more readily obtainable.

These changes will encourage retailers to participate in the program and become Certified Connecticut Grown markets, and will greatly expand access to fresh Connecticut Grown farm products by state residents. As a result, the state's goal of double consumption of these products by 2020 will be more achievable.

The agency's next two proposals focus on the state's farms under water in Long Island Sound. Just as farming on land has been a part of Connecticut's heritage, its shellfishing industry has a long and economically important history.

H.B. 5085 AN ACT CONCERNING SHELLFISH GROUNDS LEASES BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (Statutory Reference: Sec. 26-194) proposes changes to leases the State of Connecticut grants to shellfish producers for the purposes of farming underwater beds.

Currently, upon the expiration of a state shellfish lease, the lessee has the option to apply for a renewal of that lease upon the same terms and conditions as set forth in 26-194. This proposal renders that renewal option null and void if the lessee is in default in the rent payment or any covenant within the lease up for renewal, within any other state shellfish lease to that same lessee, or within any state shellfish lease to an entity in which that same lessee is a principal or corporate officer.

These changes, which were suggested to the Department by the Attorney General's Office, better protect taxpayers' resources and more effectively protect and serve all of the shellfish farmers who remain current and in good standing on their leases.

H.B. 5087 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STEALING OF SHELLFISH (Statutory References: Secs. 26-225 and 26-226) expands the penalty in the associated state statutes for stealing oysters and creating an injury to an oyster enclosure to include stealing all types of shellfish or creating an injury to all shellfish enclosures on designated or leased grounds.

The Department of Agriculture received stakeholder input encouraging this update so enforcement efforts can be improved.

The agency's final proposal this session, **S.B. 69 AN ACT CONCERNING THE FARMLAND RESTORATION AND VACANT PUBLIC LANDS PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE** (Statutory References: Secs. 22-6c and 22-6d), strengthens Governor Malloy's 2011 initiative to create the Farmland Restoration program to reclaim farmland that has gone out of production due to encroachment by invasive plants and overgrown conditions.

Changes to Section 22-6c of the Connecticut General Statutes explicitly define "farmland restoration plan," elaborate on what treatments are reimbursable, increase the maximum reimbursement on state and municipal lands to 90% (up to a maximum of \$20,000.00), and allow

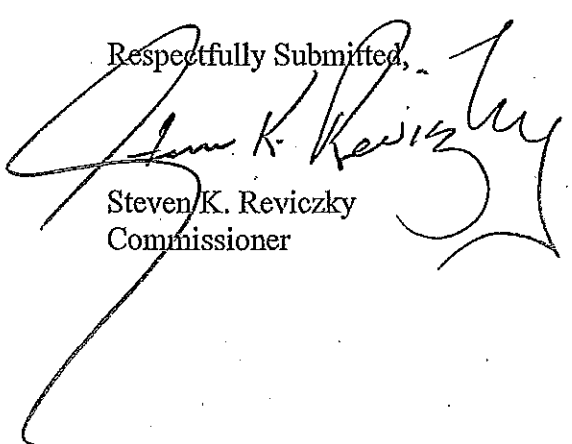
for monetary and in-kind services for the farmer's contribution.

Changes to Section 22-6d will allow broader reimbursement for fencing under the definition of "agricultural restoration purposes."

These changes will strengthen the program and assist with Governor Malloy's vision to bring more land into production.

That concludes my testimony this morning. Thank you for your attention and for considering the merits of these proposals before you. If you have questions, I will be happy to answer and provide any additional information you would like.

Respectfully Submitted,



Steven K. Reviczky
Commissioner